


MEMORANDUM

TO: Pocatello City Council
FROM: Ian Johnson, Deputy City Attorney 
RE: Authorization of Grant Submission for the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, Inc.'s Call for Collaboration: The Community Project
DATE: February 9, 2022

I have reviewed the above-referenced Authorization of Grant Submission for the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, Inc.'s Call for Collaboration: The Community Project. This document meets with my approval for approval from the City Council. This approval will also extend to subsequent documents requiring the Mayor's signature.

Feel free to contact me directly with any questions.

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PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
144 Wilson Ave.
P.O. Box 4169
Pocatello, Idaho 83205-4169
(208) 234-6232 • Fax: (208) 234-6578



AGENDA ITEM NO. _____

TO: Mayor Blad & City Council Members

FROM: John Banks, Parks & Recreation Director
Christine Howe, CDBG Program Coordinator

DATE: February 9, 2022

SUBJECT: Authorization of Grant Submission for the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, Inc.'s Call for Collaboration: The Community Project

The City of Pocatello Parks and Recreation Department, working with the Neighborhood & Community Services Division, is presenting a draft application for "The Community Project", a funding opportunity being provided by the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health Inc. for municipalities in Idaho. The Department is requesting approval to submit this application for funding which would provide up to \$85,000 toward a Community Splashpad at O.K. Ward Park. The grant submission deadline is February 28, 2022.

The Community Project, as funded through the Foundation for Health, is seeking projects to "define, design, and create outdoor public spaces that bring people together". Staff has determined that the Community Splashpad project fits the mission and spirit of the grant and would be a viable candidate for funding. The grant would contribute up to \$85,000 toward the project, provide technical assistance for extensive community outreach and engagement, and provide a stipend for up to 80 hours of staff time to work with the Foundation on the program.

The total estimated project cost is between \$400,000-\$450,000. The City is seeking alternative funding sources through a partnership with a local business entity for the remaining costs of the Community Splashpad. The facility will be maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department as part of ongoing maintenance of O.K. Ward Park. The City has completed preliminary design (concept) plans for the Splashpad.

This project will enhance and improve O.K. Ward Park, particularly for the families and patrons that utilize Brooklyn's Playground and the covered pavilion area. The park, donated by the Ward family in 1992, serves as a premier community facility with tens of thousands of residents utilizing the park, playground, fields, and amenities annually. The Foundation grant presents an opportunity to enhance and improve this vital community asset.

Staff is requesting that Council authorize submission of the grant application to the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health Inc. for a Community Splashpad at OK Ward Park.

If you have any questions, please contact John Banks at 208-234-6236 and jbanks@pocatello.us, or Christine Howe at 208-234-6186 and chowe@pocatello.us.

The Community Project
Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health
Feb 28, 2022
City of Pocatello – Parks and Recreation in conjunction with Planning and Development Services

Project Location: O.K. Ward Park

Contact Information:

City Name: Pocatello, Idaho

John Banks
Parks & Recreation Director
jbanks@pocatello.us
208-234-6236

Christine Howe
CDBG Program Coordinator, Neighborhood and Community Services
chowe@pocatello.us
208-234-6186

Background

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health works to create a healthier Idaho by bringing people together and creating partnerships in communities. We take pride in listening to our partners, and we are hearing that cities are looking for ways to bring people together for the benefit of the community. The Community Project will provide cities an opportunity to unite community leaders and residents to define, design, and create outdoor public spaces that bring people together.

Why are you applying for this Call for Collaboration? What are the needs you are seeing in your community that align with the purpose of The Community Project?

The City of Pocatello was founded in 1889 as a result of the transcontinental migration West, which included an influx of settlers, miners, prospectors, and farmers. This community served as the Gateway to the North West, connecting Montana, Utah, and Washington via the Union Pacific Railroad. As a result of this, Pocatello experienced a boon of settlers from different cultures and working classes. As a railroad bedroom community, the blue collar working culture of the City has been formative in its local culture and greatly influences its neighborhoods, as is evidenced by the City's "Triangle Neighborhood" and its Historic Downtown. Equally important is the surrounding recreation, as Pocatello is located in the foothill of the Rocky Mountains in the Portneuf River Valley. The Portneuf and expanding greenway connects the City to its ecological amenities, while the surrounding open spaces and trails, primarily the City Creek trail system and surrounding lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, provide ample outdoor recreation opportunities.

Despite these abundant resources, Pocatello is still in need of more formalized recreating opportunities, particularly for those residents living in more densely populated neighborhoods in proximity to the City's commercial and business districts or for those lacking transportation and access to open spaces.

In particular, the City's low to moderate income neighborhoods do not have adequate access to open space and public recreating resources. The City utilizes different programs to address these gaps in access, including its federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the City's Parks and Recreation Department, which is responsible for maintaining these varied spaces throughout Pocatello. However, with over hundreds of acres of open spaces to manage, resources are stretched thin. The goal of this project is to bring recreating opportunities to those residents in need of those resources through an enhancement of the O.K. Ward Park that serves the neighborhoods near Quinn Road and is the most-utilized recreation resource the City manages.

This area is located in one of the City's low-moderate income census blocks as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). According to HUD data, over 50% of the residents in this area meet the definition of low-moderate income, meaning they earn 80% or less of area median income. The park is located in a residential high density zone and abuts a commercial business area behind neighboring Chubbuck's Pine Ridge Mall. The area is surrounded by highly trafficked thoroughways as well as Interstate 86 and US Highways 91 and 30. These neighborhoods are far removed from the City's Portneuf River Greenway and the City Creek trail system, which is over 5 miles away. There is limited walkability to any other recreating amenities and public transit is not readily accessible, with the nearest stop nearly a mile away.

Situated on just over 40 acres, land for the City of Pocatello's "OK Ward Park" was donated in 1992 by Mrs. Opal M. Ward and the Ward family in honor and memory of her husband Mr. Owen K. Ward, for the development of a public park which could be used and enjoyed by the community in perpetuity. The Ward's had owned the OK Ward Park parcel since 1980, and to this day, extended members of the Ward family still reside in the Quinn Road home of Mr. and Mrs. Ward, situated directly adjacent to the OK Ward Park entrance area. Per donation agreement terms, City improvements to OK Ward Park were to be designed and implemented with the goal of providing maximum community and family benefit. To this end, the City has incrementally developed OK Ward Park over the past 25 plus years to include its current state of amenities as follows:

- Brooklyn's Playground (premier playground facility in the City's park system, designed with "inclusive" play elements & amenities, and poured in place rubberized surfacing)
- Expansive/Two-sided Covered Picnic Pavilion (w/electricity and water available)
- Permanent Restroom facilities
- Large Turf Area (hosting numerous yearly & on-going sports league activities)
- Tree Arboretum
- Simplot Softball Complex (4 ballfields)
- Picnic Tables/Areas, BBQ's, and Park Benches throughout park
- Basketball Court, Horseshoe Pits, and Volleyball Courts
- Ample Parking Areas/Lots to support all park activities

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health grant would provide an opportunity to continue the improvements at this community-wide recreation facility to serve those populations in the City most in need of access to the amenity. The project proposes the construction of a Community Splashpad on the southeastern corner of the park, adjacent to the pavilion and near the existing Brooklyn's Playground.

OK Ward Park is one of the most, if not the most popular park facility in the City of Pocatello's parks system. Brooklyn's Playground is the unquestioned gem of the Parks & Recreation Department's Playground inventory, and is far and away the most popular and heavily used play area in the City. The adjacent Picnic Pavilion, large sports turf areas, and tree arboretum facility are also extremely well utilized and enjoyed by large numbers of community members year-round, on both a drop-in and reserved activity basis, as is the 4-field Softball Complex located at the rear of OK Ward Park. All areas are comfortably supported by ample available parking and permanent restroom facilities.

Parks and Recreation Department staff feel that OK Ward Park is ideally situated as the best location in the City's park system for a Community Splashpad facility. In regards to ages of children and family use, the vast majority of children who would be able to enjoy the Community Splashpad are in direct correlation to the large numbers of Brooklyn's Playground users (i.e. 10 yrs. and younger), which the Splashpad would be placed directly adjacent to. In addition, the Splashpad facility would seamlessly cater to all Pavilion use – from reserved birthday party/family gatherings, to School District #25 Summer Lunch Program participants, as well as all sports league participant family & sibling use, and extensive numbers of drop-in park users. A Community Splashpad at OK Ward Park would immediately and undoubtedly be a wildly popular and extremely heavily utilized family-friendly facility.

The City has already drafted preliminary design plans for the project and could benefit from the Foundation's extensive community engagement efforts to ensure the project process includes the users of the park, surrounding neighbors, and community members. The City wants to ensure the end product involves those who will ultimately use the amenity.

Partners

Recipients will participate in a professionally-guided process to help cities define their wants and needs. Key partners and community leaders from across the community would come together to help collaborate on The Community Project.

Which partners in your community do you see working with you on this project?

The City has a strong partnership with local businesses, non-profits, community based organizations, and more. For this project, the City of Pocatello Parks and Recreation Department staff are pursuing a partnership agreement with a local business entity to fund a portion of the Splashpad project cost. Because construction costs have increased substantially in the last several years, largely due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the City relies on these established relationships with local partners to adequately fund the project expenses. Through these partnerships and accessing the Foundation's resources, this project can come to fruition.

In addition, the City will work with its local partners to encourage use of the space and incorporate the needs of the residents. This includes local neighborhood associations as well as direct engagement with residents and neighborhood representatives who live in proximity to the park. The City is currently undergoing a Comprehensive Plan update which will serve as the master plan or guiding document for the City through 2040. As part of this plan, an extensive city-wide survey was conducted along with local engagement activities and outreach. The results of this outreach showed that parks and park

improvements was the number one priority for residents and greatest need in the City. To ensure the vision of the Splashpad project and upgrades at OK Ward meet the needs of the residents, the City will work with Blue Cross to conduct similar outreach.

In addition, the City's Parks and Recreation Department will manage the space and work in conjunction with the neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) Division, a division of the Planning and Development Services Department, to see the project through. The NCS Division works primarily with the City's low to moderate income populations who are most in need of access to resources. This is a key stakeholder group to provide outreach to regarding the project.

Community Engagement & Communications

The Community Project will require significant community engagement to reach a wide variety of residents to hear and gather their input and help unite them around a project that strengthens and enhances the community.

What community members and populations would you want to specifically engage for this project? Please list specific neighborhoods, organizations, or community groups.

The City will engage the community through a variety of methods. A local non-profit organization, NeighborWorks Pocatello, oversees several neighborhood associations. These groups are composed of representatives from the neighborhood who promote grassroots organization and engagement. The proposed project is located just north of the Lewis & Clark neighborhood; however, residents from across the City visit the park to utilize the playing fields, walking path, pavilion, and playground. The City will engage with these Neighborhood groups to gather feedback from a wide swath of residents. Additionally, the City will engage directly with those residents who live nearby the facility in the surrounding neighborhoods. Because a number of local organizations use the park (schools, sports groups, families), the City will also reach out to those groups to gather feedback on the project proposal. In addition, the City will reach out to other nearby organizations such as the businesses located at the mall and local religious institutions to extend outreach. Finally, the City will promote the project to the population as a whole using outreach techniques described below. These are offered in multiple languages across a myriad of platforms to ensure broad outreach and engagement.

What methods and channels do you currently use to communicate with your residents?

The City will utilize a number of methods to provide outreach regarding the project, including direct communication, social media/web communication, and broader-based engagement. The City operates a website, individual department pages, and various social media pages (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor). These will be used to spread the word about the project, to educate residents, and to solicit information and feedback about the proposal. In addition, the City issues a Mayor's newsletter and distributes press releases. These outlets will be used to announce the project. Similarly, the City works with local news station 6 to promote grant awards, projects, and events. The City has provided information to residents through the City-wide billing system for utilities as well. Finally, the City will present this application to the City Council at a public meeting which is broadcast live and recorded for re-broadcast. Announcements and news also are made available at the public City Council meetings to spread the word.

Project specific communication has involved attendance at local community events to hand out brochures or fliers about community programs, conducting City-hosted events (such as charrettes for the Comprehensive Plan) for direct outreach, and presenting to various community groups such as the Council of Governments, Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, School District #25, and other partners.

Overall, the City has a wide range of communication tools it can utilize to ensure proper engagement related to the proposed project.

Potential Project Spaces

The Community Project intends to unite community leaders and residents to define, design, and create outdoor public spaces that bring people together. Participants will walk through a professionally guided process to help them identify their wants and needs, select a project type, and design a space that strengthens and enhances their community. The recipient will receive up to \$85,000 to help with the implementation of the project.

Do you have an outdoor public space that could be the focus for this project? If yes, please describe the space.

The proposed Splashpad project would be located at the O.K. Ward Park/Brooklyn's Playground located in the northern part of the City on the W. Quinn Road and Sunny Brook Drive block. The project would include the creation of a Splashpad adjacent to the existing pavilion in the southeast corner of the park. This is a 41-acre city-owned park with softball fields, a basketball court, covered pavilion, playground, picnic tables, benches, restrooms, and water access that provides for many activities including on-leash dog walking, BBQs, horseshoes and use of the accessible paved path. There is ample parking and access to utilities including electricity. The parcel was donated to the City in 1992.

Do you have budget available to also help with the building of the project?

At this time the City is working on establishing a local partner to assist with the funding of the project. In-kind staff time has been devoted to the project to date.

Do you have budget available to maintain the physical space once complete?

The City's Parks and Recreation Department has a maintenance budget for facilities and spaces. The Department currently maintains the O.K. Ward park and would include maintenance of the added Splashpad in this budget line item.

Staff Commitment

Recipients of The Community Project grant will need to dedicate a staff person to lead the project in their community. Stipends will be allocated to compensate for staff time. The staff would need to work on the project over a six-month time period that would require approximately 80 hours of their time.

Who would lead The Community Project in your community? What is their current role in the community? Do they have the ability to work on the project?

The City Parks and Recreation Department would take the lead on the Community Project effort. Parks Department Superintendent Brett Hewatt and Parks Dept. staff would be working directly with contractors to facilitate construction of the splash pad project, following award of contract. In addition, the NCS Division would support as needed through either direct staff time or in-kind assistance.

Goal

What benefits do you hope result from The Community Project in your city?

The goals of the project are to enhance a highly utilized public space in the community while encouraging and promoting community engagement for not only the residents in the immediate neighborhoods, but also for the City of Pocatello residents as whole. Access to public spaces is vital for enhancing the lives of the City's residents by providing not only recreation opportunities which can improve health outcomes but also to provide community-based spaces that encourage gathering and a sense of place. Now more than ever, in the midst of a global pandemic, access to outdoor spaces and opportunities is vital to the health of the City's residents, allowing them to socialize and gather in a safe manner.

Additionally, this project will enhance the public space for those residents living in the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly those low to moderate income residents. The project will enhance the quality of life for those residents overall.

Finally, through the unique community engagement-focused model proposed by Blue Cross, the City will be able to not only engage residents and solicit feedback to create a product that reflects their wants and needs in the area, but the City will also be able to promote the open spaces and varied amenities. The engagement will be an opportunity to educate residents about the amenities available at OK Ward Park and other facilities and opportunities available through the City's Parks and Recreation program. This project will expand the residents' access and use of spaces while encouraging stewardship of them in the process. This project has the potential to reach tens of thousands of residents annually who access OK Ward Park.

Overall, this proposal will achieve the ultimate goal of enhancing and improving access to recreational opportunities for the residents of the City of Pocatello.